
News Release

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Children's Memorial Day observed at state Capitol *Observance remembers violent deaths of children, promotes services*

STATE CAPITOL, Lansing, Mich. – Michigan's Children, the Family Independence Agency and other child advocates observed Children's Memorial Day at the state Capitol Building today.

The observance—a national initiative carried out in 35 other states on the fourth Friday of April—is an effort to help focus awareness on preventable child mortality and keep children safe and healthy. It is also part of Michigan's observance of Child Abuse Prevention Month in April.

"The health and safety of children is our priority in Michigan," said Family Independence Agency director Douglas E. Howard. "Children's Memorial Day is an opportunity for communities to honor children lost to violence and commit themselves to hope for the future."

Pam Posthumus, chair of the Children's Trust Fund, read a proclamation from Gov. John Engler during the ceremony.

Children's Memorial Day is a national initiative spearheaded by the Child Welfare League of America. Sharon Peters, president of Michigan's Children, also spoke at the event. Other speakers included Dr. Mary Smyth, Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak, and Virginia Harmon, deputy director for Community Living, Children and Families, Michigan Department of Community Health.

"We can and must do more to protect children in Michigan," Peters said. "We hope community leaders, businesses, schools and child advocates will join with us to display the Children's Memorial Flag and in developing other community responses to child violence."

During Children's Memorial Day, Michigan's Children will display the "Children's Memorial Flag" that depicts linked silhouettes of children with one missing from the chain. CWLA promotes flying the flag anytime a child dies as a way to honor the child.

During the observance, a group of 4th and 5th grade children from Lansing's Walnut Elementary School and students from Otto Middle School participated in the ceremony, reading statements they prepared about their feelings on violence in school and their communities.

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Lansing-based Michigan's Children is a statewide child advocacy organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for children and their families through public-private partnerships. The Family Independence Agency is Michigan's public child welfare agency.

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For more information on children's services, consult the FIA website www.mfia.state.mi.us or Michigan's Children at www.michiganschildren.org